



**Chris Butler MfA
Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Archaeological Watching Brief
at
Pilbeams, School Hill,
Burwash, East Sussex**

RR/2011/1988/P

Project Number: CBAS0305

By
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August 2012

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the construction of a new single storey extension at Pilbeams, School Hill, Burwash, East Sussex. All excavations were carried out by hand. The excavation consisted of the removal of made ground to reveal the natural Wadhurst Clay and a footing trench was cut into this self, same natural and was approximately 300mm wide by 600mm deep by 5m in length. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd (CBAS) had been commissioned by Mr Allan Napier (The Client) to carry out an Archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new single storey rear extension at Pilbeams, School Hill, Burwash, East Sussex TQ 6774 2467 (Fig. 1). As a result of the site's location, and the archaeological potential of the area, the local planning authority put a condition on the planning consent for the development (RR/2011/1988/P), requiring an appropriate programme of archaeological work to be undertaken.
- 1.2 Pilbeams is a Grade II listed building of 17th century origin, and was originally a single house with its neighbour 'Bell Croft'. The site is situated within the Burwash Conservation Area, and is within an Archaeological Notification Area that defines the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval market village of Burwash (Fig. 2).
- 1.3 The underlying geology of the site according to the British Geological Survey (sheet 303) is Wadhurst Clay, with an outcrop of Tunbridge Wells Sand immediately to the north of the site.
- 1.4 The appropriate programme of archaeological work comprised of an archaeological watching brief, as specified in a brief prepared by the Archaeology Team at ESCC. A written scheme of investigation¹ covering the watching brief was prepared by CBAS, and approved by the local planning authority. This written scheme of investigation covered the watching brief, and has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority.
- 1.5 The watching brief was required to monitor any intrusive groundworks at the site during the construction of the extension (Fig. 6). The fieldwork was undertaken on the 24th May 2012 by the author.

¹ Butler, C. 2011 *Written scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Pilbeams, School Hill, Burwash,, East Sussex*. CBAS

2.0 Archaeological & Historical Background (Figs. 2 and 3)

- 2.1 There is no evidence for Mesolithic activity within a 1km radius of the site centre however flint is known to have been worked during this period immediately to the south of Burwash, on the south facing slope of the ridge². This find spot produced a small flint assemblage that included a core, seven un-retouched blades and flakes, two scrapers and two micro-burins.
- 2.2 The closest potential Neolithic find spot to the site is of a stray flint axe recently discovered in the garden of a house on Burwash High Street (MES10674). A prehistoric or Roman trackway (MES4360) ran along the ridgetop and may have come into existence during the Neolithic period although there is no archaeological evidence to substantiate such an early origin. This ridgeway is now the A265 which runs through Burwash.
- 2.3 An Early Bronze Age copper axe was reputedly found at Burwash (MES3597) although its exact find spot is unknown. The nearest ironworking sites to the site are located between 1.5 and 1.75km away, northeast of Burwash town at Borders Farm (TQ 6922 2525) and Park Wood (TQ 6897 2599)³, but neither has currently been dated, although they are likely to be Romano-British.
- 2.4 The place name of Burwash is believed to derive from the Old English for 'ploughed field by a fortification', comprising the two elements of 'burh' and 'ersc'⁴. The Manor of Burwash is not referenced within the Domesday Book (completed in 1086)⁵. The place name evidence and the early medieval origin of Burwash would suggest that a farmstead at the very least was present nearby in the Saxon period.
- 2.5 After 1066 the Manor of Burwash was granted to the Count of Eu along with the rest of the Rape of Hastings⁶. Upon seizure of the land, Henry III (reign 1216-1272) granted the Rape of Hastings to Peter Earl of Savoy, then to Prince Edward his son and then to John son of the Duke of 'little Britaine'⁷. Later, Henry IV (reign 1399-1413) gave the Rape of Hastings to Sir John Pelham.

² Wymer, J.J. 1977 *Gazetteer of Mesolithic sites in England and Wales with a gazetteer of Upper Palaeolithic sites in England and Wales*. CBA Report 22.

³ <http://www.wirgdata.org>

⁴ <http://nottingham.ac.uk/~aezins/kepn.php>

⁵ Morris, J. (Ed) 1976 *Domesday Book: Sussex*, Chichester, Phillimore.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/text/chap_page.jsp?t_id=Camden&c_id=11&p_id=8292#pn_279

- 2.6** The Medieval settlement of Burwash may have originated in the early 12th century, this being the date of the west tower and the earliest surviving feature of the Church of St Bartholmew (MES3596). The village may have initially been established close to the church, only to later expand westwards along the High Street. The site of Burwash manor house (MES3689) is speculated to have been located around 275m to the southeast of the church. In recognition of the status of the village as a local trading centre, King Henry III granted the settlement the right to a weekly market in 1252⁸ (MES19426). This would have attracted additional commerce and industry to Burwash thereby contributing to its growth along the High Street.
- 2.7** Burwash village comprises five Medieval buildings that are Listed: Soanes Cottage / Beech House (MES3665), Burghurst (MES3658) and The Old House (MES3643) which are all 15th century in date, the latter situated in School Hill, and Chaunt House (DES4488) and The Corn Stores (DES2824) which can both only be dated broadly to the Medieval period. The 15th century buildings stand close to the church, either on the High Street or on Bell Alley Road to the west of the church, whilst the other two Listed Buildings of medieval date stand further along the High Street west of Ham Lane.
- 2.8** All seven Listed Buildings of 16th century built (see Appendix 2) stand on Burwash High Street, thus perhaps implying that the village has yet to expand beyond the main thoroughfare. Two such buildings, The Bell Inn (MES3607) and The Bear Inn Hotel (DES2424), are known from the census to have been public inns since at least 1841⁹ and may have functioned as such since their construction. The name of one 16th century buildings (DES2425) suggests that it was a cobblers at one time, so revealing just one of occupations that villagers must have held beyond that of farm labourer. Nonetheless, the central location of a barn (MES3619) set back from the High Street, just east of Ham Lane, highlights the continued agricultural nature of the settlement in this century.
- 2.9** A large number of 17th century buildings stand along the High Street, Ivy House & Cottage (MES3603), Hoppers Croft (MES3637), The Granary (MES3663), Glebe, Jasmine and North View Cottages (MES3668), Rampyden (MES3672) and Denes House (MES20271), whilst 1-2 School Hill and Bellcroft and Pilbeams (MES19485) are situated in School Hill. These suggest that the village was expanding out from its High Street focus during the 17th century. Later houses, dating to the 18th century, such as Linden Cottage (MES19360), may have been later infill or replaced earlier houses.

⁸ Bleach, J. and Gardiner, M. 1999 'Medieval Markets and Ports', in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (Eds) *An Historical Atlas of Sussex*, Chichester, Phillimore & Co. LTD.

⁹ <http://theweald.org>

- 2.10** The Burwash Tithe map of 1839 (Fig. 4)¹⁰ shows Bellcroft and Pilbeams in School Hill, which at that time were at the limit of the village's expansion along this road, hinting that at this time the growth of Burwash had stopped. The 1st Edition OS map of 1873 shows little change, although the National School has been built immediately to the south of the site (Fig. 5), and later OS maps (e.g. 3rd Edition OS map 1909) show that there is little further development until the middle of the 20th century when a 1959 aerial photograph¹¹ and the 1961 OS map show that further houses have been built along School Hill to the south of the site. On the 1971 OS map Pilbeams is known as 'Fairview'.
- 2.11** A war memorial (DES4522), erected in around 1920 at the junction between the High Street and School Hill, commemorates the 75 men from the village who died during the two World Wars. The memorial is the only 20th century building that is Listed. During World War Two, a series of six roadblocks (including MES17300 & MES17302) were positioned to prevent the enemy from entering Burwash from the east. The remains of an air raid shelter were found in 2006 during a watching brief (EES1430) at Chestnut Cottage (DES2820) on the High Street.
- 2.12** An archaeological watching brief at Burwash CE Primary School in 2009 revealed no archaeological deposits or features (EES14522). Other watching briefs in the High Street also failed to locate any evidence for medieval activity (EES14003, EES14308 & EES15060).

¹⁰ ESRO - TD/E/157

¹¹ NMR (RAF/543/626 8 July 1959)

3.0 Method Statement

- 3.1** The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with ESCC's *Standards for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording and Post-Excavation in East Sussex* dated April 2008 (Recommended Standards).
- 3.2** The ground-works (Fig. 6) were excavated by hand under archaeological supervision. These consisted of the removal of the brick paving and the made-ground underneath down to the natural Wadhurst Clay. A footing trench approximately 300mm wide by 600mm deep by 5m in length was also excavated by hand into the natural Wadhurst Clay. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered during the ground-works.
- 3.3** The spoil from the excavations was inspected on a regular basis to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest. A metal detector was not used due to the nature of the spoil which was then loaded into buckets before being deposited into a skip for deposition off-site.
- 3.4** All deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.5** The archive is presently held by Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd. A site reference of PLB12 has been allocated, and the archive will be offered to Bexhill Museum.

4 Results

- 4.1** Context 1 was a friable clayey-silt topsoil for a raised flowerbed. It was a mixed deposit with ceramic building material (CBM) <10mm in size at 1%, glass <10mm in size at <1% and sub-rounded and angular flint at <10mm at 1%. The overall depth of Context 1 was approximately 200mm.
- 4.2** Context 2 was a mid-yellow silty-clay subsoil deposit which lay underneath Context 1. This was a firm, mid yellowish-grey deposit exposed in section after the removal of the raised flowerbed and contained CBM flecks <3mm in size at <1%. This deposit was approximately 130mm in depth.
- 4.3** Below Context 2 lay a firm clay natural (Context 3) of Wadhurst Clay (Plate 1). It was a mid-yellow colour with some grey streaks, and bands/patches of reddish-brown. It was excavated to a depth of 900mm to the limit of excavation and had no inclusions.
- 4.4** Context 4 was a made-ground deposit laying below and associated with the brick paving and laying directly on-top of the natural, Context 3. It was a soft-firm deposit, made up of sand with silty patches and was consequently yellow with dark grey patches and 250mm in depth.



Plate 1: Section of Footing Trench

- 4.5** The ground-reduction below the brick paving uncovered a modern ceramic surface drain running approximately north-east to south-west (Context **5**). This was cut into Context **3**. Running almost parallel to this pipe, some 300mm to the north, was a modern water pipe, Context **6**, which also cut into the natural.
- 4.6** No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief, and there were no other deposits or layers noted.

5.0 Finds

- 5.1** No finds were recovered from the watching brief as all the artefacts noted (glass, CBM) in Context **1** dated to post-1900.

6.0 Discussion

- 6.1** Small scale excavations such as this can sometimes be informative, unfortunately on this occasion, no archaeology was noted. There was a surprising lack of material recovered during the watching brief.
- 6.2** Earlier watching briefs undertaken at the adjacent Primary School in 2009 and elsewhere in the High Street also failed to unearth any evidence for medieval activity.
- 6.3** This lack of any older archaeological material from either a secure stratigraphic context or as topsoil finds is interesting as it presents us with two possible options relating to the past land use at this site. One possibility is that the main focus of settlement and trade has always been along the High Street with School Hill being regarded as nothing more than a well-established thoroughfare with no substantial development or major activity taking place along School Hill until the 17th and the 18th century.
- 6.4** Another, and far more likely scenario, is that the remains of any human activity from pre-history through to the early post-medieval period (if any evidence did indeed remain on-site) have been truncated by later building work. The site stratigraphy strongly suggests that the building of the outshot to the rear of the house, or Pilbeams itself, may have resulted in the site having been terraced into the hill therefore removing earlier deposits up to and including the natural.
- 6.5** On a balance of probabilities, given the nature of the site, the small area of the excavation and the results from previous excavations within Burwash, it is most likely that both factors have come into play on this occasion.
- 6.5** The methodology adopted for this watching brief proved to be satisfactory, and the confidence rating should be considered to be very reliable.

7.0 Acknowledgements

- 7.1** I would like to thank the client, Mr. Alan Napier, for commissioning the archaeological evaluation. The project was managed for CBAS by Chris Butler, and monitored for ESCC by Greg Chuter.

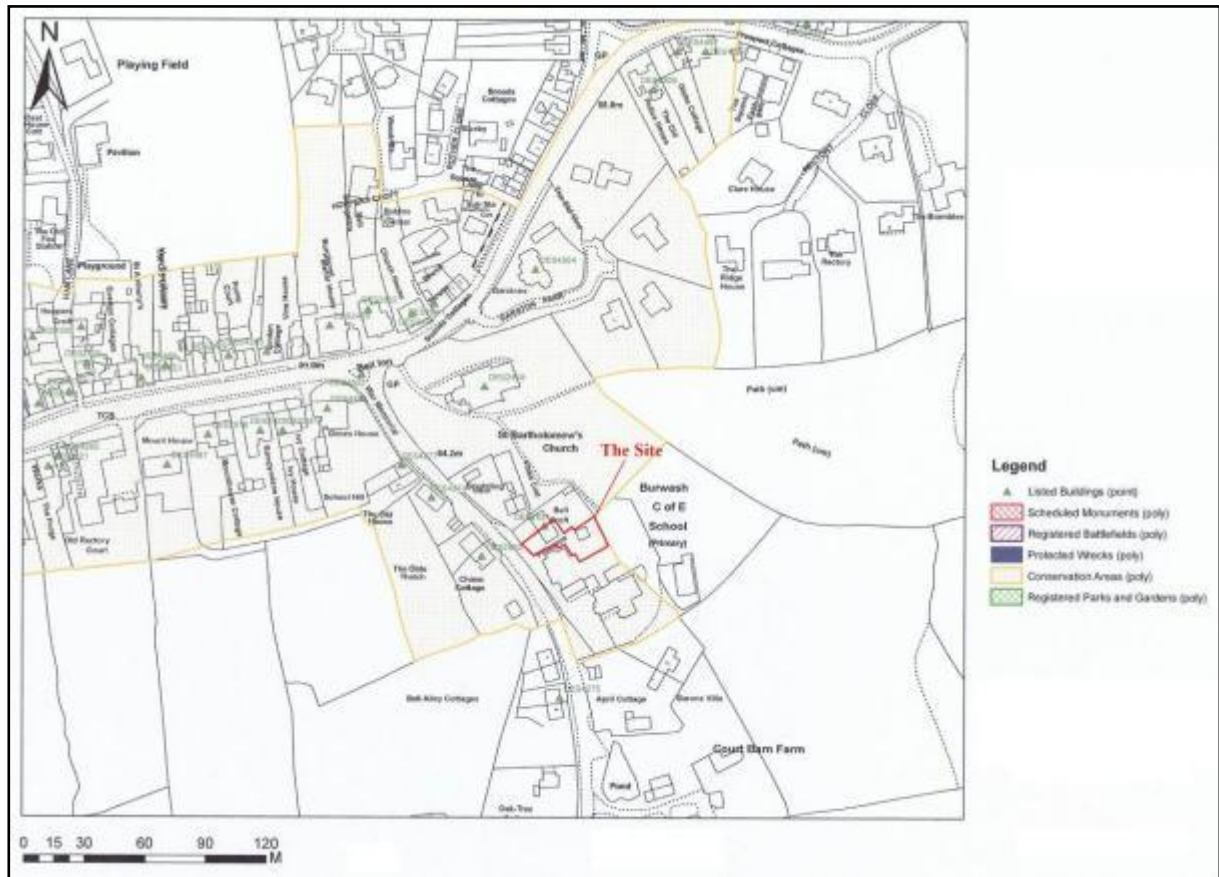


Fig. 2: Pilbeams, Burwash: Conservation Area and Listed Buildings
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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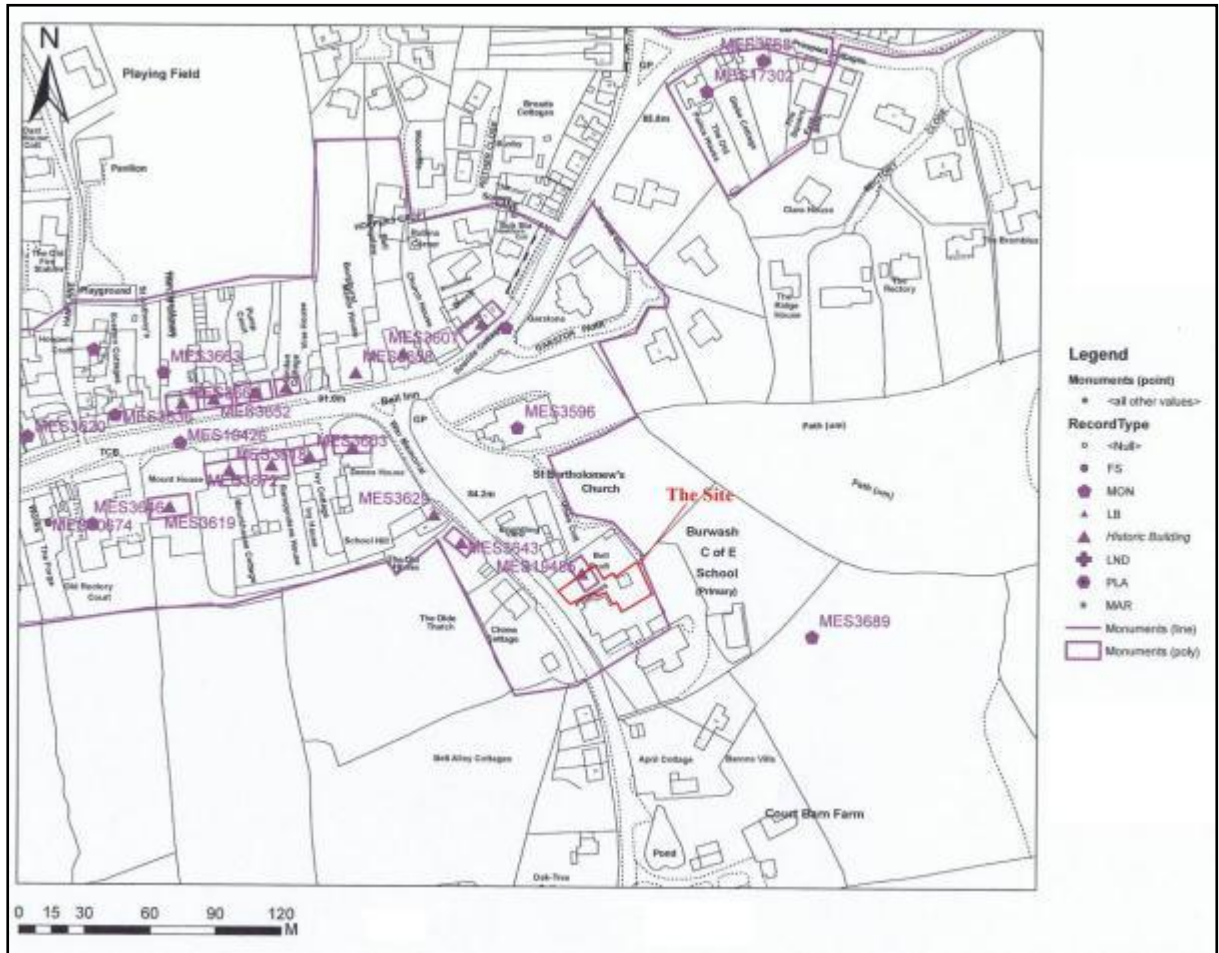


Fig. 3: Pilbeams, Burwash: Sites on the HER
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)
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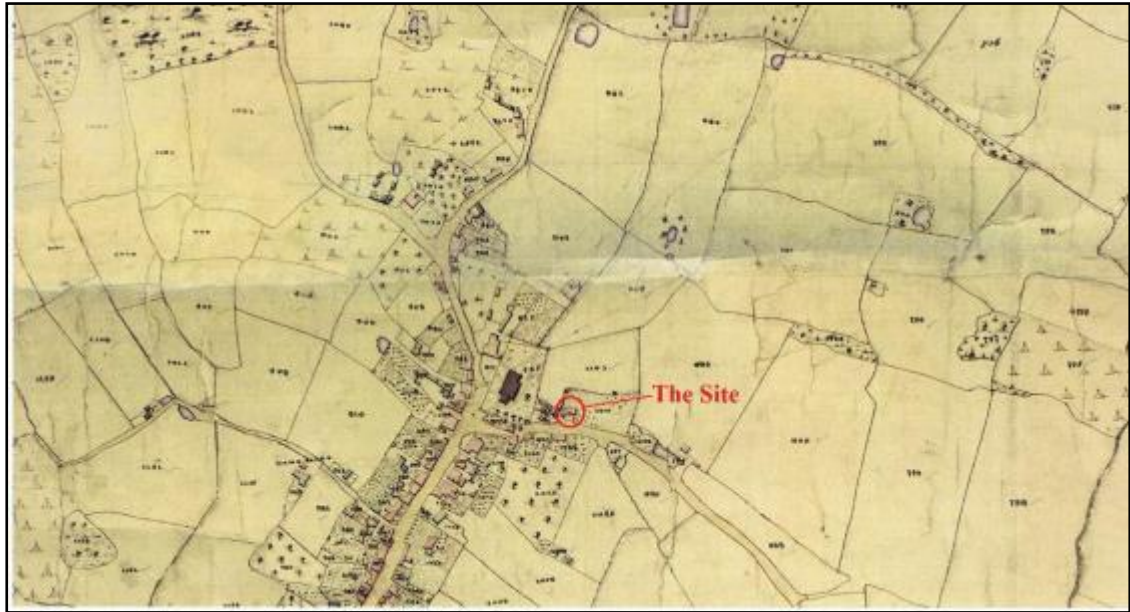


Fig. 4: Pilbeams, Burwash: Tithe Map 1839
(Copyright ESRO - TD/E/157)

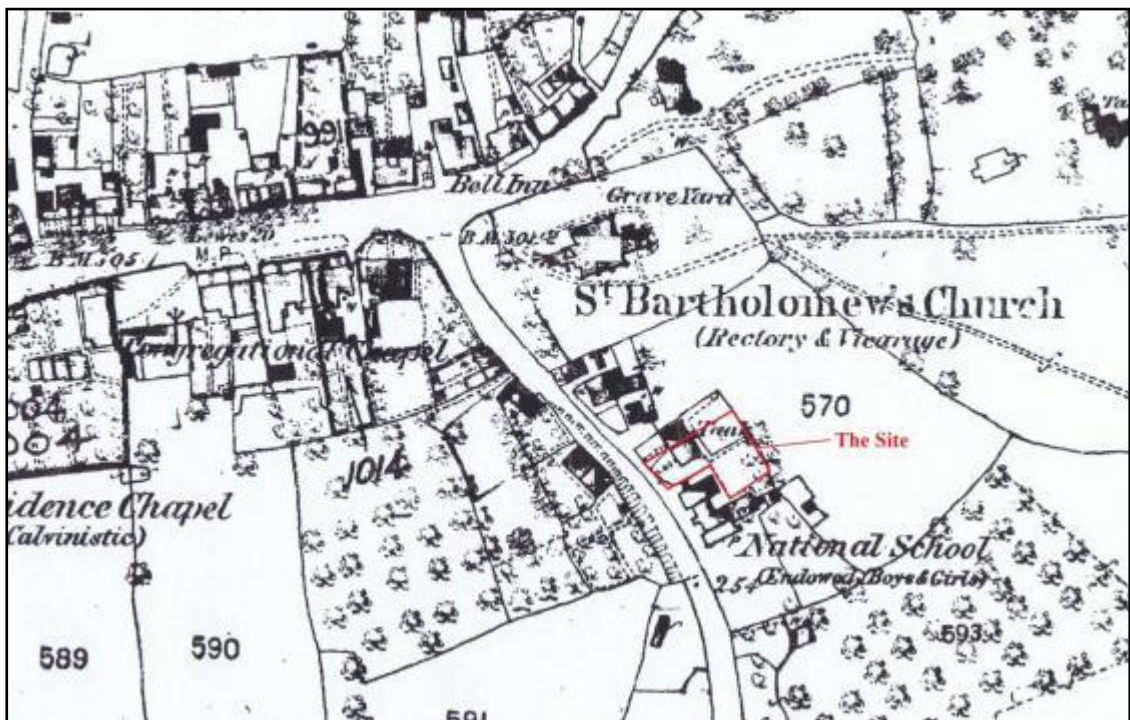


Fig. 5: Pilbeams, Burwash: 1st Edition OS 1873

Appendix 1 HER Summary Form

Site Code	PLB12					
Identification Name and Address	Pilbeams, Burwash, East Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 6774 2467					
Geology	Wadhurst Clay					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief X	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban X	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 24/05/12	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Mr. A. Napier					
Project Manager	Chris Butler MfA					
Project Supervisor	David Atkin					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM X	Other		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the construction of a new single storey extension at Pilbeams, School Hill, Burwash, East Sussex. All excavations were carried out by hand. The excavation consisted of the removal of made ground to reveal the natural Wadhurst Clay and a footing trench was cut into this self, same natural and was approximately 300mm wide by 600mm deep and was 5m in overall length. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief.</i></p>						

Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd

Chris Butler has been an archaeologist since 1985, and formed the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in 1987, since when it has carried out numerous fieldwork projects, and was runner up in the Pitt-Rivers Award at the British Archaeological Awards in 1996. Having previously worked as a Pensions Technical Manager and Administration Director in the financial services industry, Chris formed **Chris Butler Archaeological Services** at the beginning of 2002.

Chris is a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and a committee member of the Lithic Studies Society. He is a part time lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sussex, and until recently taught A-Level Archaeology at Bexhill 6th Form College having qualified (Cert. Ed.) as a teacher in 2006. He continues to run the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in his spare time.

Chris specialises in prehistoric flintwork analysis, but has directed excavations, landscape surveys and watching briefs, including the excavation of a Beaker Bowl Barrow, a Saxon cemetery and settlement, Roman pottery kilns, and a Mesolithic hunting camp. He has recently undertaken large landscape surveys of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren and is Co-Director of the Barcombe Roman Villa excavation project.

His publications include *Prehistoric Flintwork*, *East Sussex Under Attack* and *West Sussex Under Attack*, all of which are published by Tempus Publishing Ltd.

Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd is available for Flintwork Analysis, Project Management, Military Archaeology, Desktop Assessments, Field Evaluations, Excavation work, Watching Briefs, Landscape and Woodland Surveys & Fieldwalking, Post Excavation Services and Report Writing.

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